

Evaluating News: Good, Bad, Totally Fake?

Get Started:

- ☐ Who is the author, producer or publisher? What kind of website is it? *Look at the URL for clues.*
- ☐ What kind of content is it? (News, Opinion, Satire, Advertising, Advocacy for a cause)
- ☐ What is the date?

Your Notes Here:

Is it Fake? Ask:

- ☐ Does the content match the headline?
- ☐ Does it seem too good or too outrageous to be true?
- ☐ Do the images seem altered or mismatched with the content?
- ☐ Does the story include facts or other evidence?
- ☐ Does the story name sources for the facts? If so, who are they and why should you believe them?
- ☐ Does the article/story seem to be selling something?

Your Notes Here:

Is it Biased? Ask all of the above questions, plus:

- ☐ Are there stereotypes?
- ☐ Is there a lack of context? (For instance, naming a problem without exploring its causes)
- ☐ Is there unfair blame placed on one person, group or cause?
- ☐ Is the language or imagery loaded or sensational?
- ☐ Does the article include diverse experts or sources (for example, both those who study/work on an issue and those who are impacted by the issue)?
- ☐ Does it uphold journalism standards and ethics? (See: www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp)

Your Notes Here:

Evaluating News: Resources

Tools

- **AllSides** - See news from multiple perspectives, left, center and right www.allsides.com
- **FactCheck.org** - Factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. politicians www.factcheck.org
- **Media Bias / Fact Check** - Bias in news articles/sources mediabiasfactcheck.com
- **Snopes** - Fact checking rumors, news and political campaigns www.snopes.com
- **Washington Post Fact Checker** - Analysis of current news www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker

Articles and Video

- **How to Choose News** (video) from TedEd ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-choose-your-news-damon-brown
- **False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and/or Satirical “News” Sources** by Prof. Melissa Zimdar, Merrimack College tinyurl.com/zimdarsnews
- **How Data and Information Literacy Could End Fake News** by Kaleve Leetaru for Forbes www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2016/12/11/how-data-and-information-literacy-could-end-fake-news
- **How to Identify Fake News** from Indiana University <http://iue.libguides.com/c.php?g=595482&p=4119773>
- **How to Detect Bias in News Media** by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) fair.org/take-action-now/media-activism-kit/how-to-detect-bias-in-news-media
- **Six Questions That Will Tell You What Media to Trust** by Tom Rosensteil for the American Press Institute www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/six-critical-questions-can-use-evaluate-media-content
- **Truth, Truthiness, Triangulation** by Joyce Valenza for *School Library Journal* <http://blogs.slj.com/neverendingsearch/2016/11/26/truth-truthiness-triangulation-and-the-librarian-way-a-news-literacy-tool-kit-for-a-post-truth-world/>

Definitions

Fake News | Completely fabricated information; old news repackaged to look new; images altered to misrepresent reality; or stories that spin bits of real news into distorted or shocking claims. Fake news is intentionally deceitful, often in order to lure traffic, make quick money for the publisher, trick readers/viewers (a hoax), or deceive people for political agenda. Satire may be fake, but it's not as mean.

Media Bias | Information that is unfair, unbalanced or incomplete in its discussion of an issue. Biased media often lacks context and diversity, and relies on stereotypes, loaded imagery, easy explanations or highly partisan influence. Bias can occur on purpose or because the creator simply didn't seek out balanced sources, ask deep questions, do good research or provide enough context.

Editorial Perspective | Every reporter, editor or publisher has a point of view. When the point of view is transparent to the reader/viewer, it can help us understand where the creator is coming from, and to evaluate (on our own) whether we agree and what perspectives might be missing. When the perspective is hidden or the reporter denies their bias, then news quality suffers. This is why it's important to think critically about everything we read, watch and listen to.

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